CONSUMER TIME

FABRICS IN THE SPRING

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.
And here are Mrs. Freyman and Johnny.

5. FREYMAN: (LAUGHS) Why...why Johnny, you look so funny! What on earth happened to you?

6. JOHN: (GRUFFLY) Well...I don't see that there's anything to laugh about. It isn't funny, Mrs. Freyman...

7. FREYMAN: Where did you get that terrible green shirt. Look at it... with all those stripes and little checks going up and down!

8. JOHN: (UNCOMFORTABLE) You needn't say it over the air...

9. FREYMAN: And your suit, Johnny. Who sewed those patches on the elbows?

10. JOHN: Never mind, Mrs. Freyman. Can't we go on with the show?

11. FREYMAN: Well yes, Johnny...do you know what we're going to tell about today on CONSUMER TIME?

12. JOHN: I believe it was...

13. FREYMAN: All about fabrics...about cotton shirts and shorts...and men's suits...

14. JOHN: How can we talk about what there isn't any of?

15. FREYMAN: Oh...so that's it? You came in today...wearing that worn-out suit and that awful green shirt just to pose as...

16. JOHN: The typical American male, 1946. Only it is not a pose, Mrs. Freyman. This is my Christmas shirt, Mrs. Freyman. My Aunt Sophia sent it to me...said it was the only one my size left in my home town.

17. FREYMAN: Dear me!

18. JOHN: And look at it!

19. FREYMAN: It's pretty odd all right.

20. JOHN: I <u>am</u> the typical American man this winter. I can't even get a good, plain, wool suit. Do you know that? And as for cotton underwear...

21. FREYMAN: I know...Impossible!

22. JOHN: But what's happened to everything? Where are all the clothes this winter? What are returned servicemen doing for civilian suits and shirts?

23. EX-MARINE: What are we doing, Mister? We just keep on wearing our uniforms. When my terminal leave is over, frankly I don't know what I'm going to wear. Some guys are lucky, they stayed the same size all during the war, and they can wear their old clothes again. Some guys were smart, and got up some extra underwear from the quartermaster before they got out. But me...I got troubles!

24. FREYMAN: So you see, Johnny, we have quite a clothes problem these days.

25. JOHN: That's certainly true, Mrs. Freyman. What we want now...is reasons why?

26. FREYMAN: Well, I'll tell you what I found out. I was talking to a man from the Civilian Production Administration the other day. And I asked him about these shortages. He told me...

27. MAN: You know, Mrs. Freyman. There's quite a story to this current shortage of suits. First place let's understand this. The need...the demand...for men's suits and coats... is terrific. It will get even larger. Before the war, the average purchase of men's suits...was about one suit for each man every <u>four</u> years!

28. FREYMAN: Oh...is that so?

29. MAN: Yes...and right now it looks as though the average need is one suit apiece for every man in the country! Civilians, with clothes getting shiny and thin, want new ones. And veterans, of course, need civilian clothes, right away.

30. FREYMAN: Aren't stores giving some preference to servicemen?

31. MAN: Yes, the Government is asking retailers to continue their policy of giving returned servicemen "priority" on new clothes. To label "for veterans only", garments which are hard to get.

32. FREYMAN: I see now...there must be good, sound reasons for the shortage.

33. MAN: There are. First, the stores in this country have little, if any stocks of men's suits, on hand. And you wonder how the story could be otherwise. Let's begin back in 1942. In 1942, remember, the military was talking about half of all our wool fabrics.

34. FREYMAN: Yes, I remember...

35. MAN: Then...at the time of the Belgium Bulge, the army sent an emergency call back home. Soldiers had to have...immediately.. more wool overcoats for the winter ahead.

36. FREYMAN: So that demand had to be filled first...

37. MAN: Of course. And the looms of America swung over to making cloth for military overcoats... Looms which had been making coats for civilians.

38. FREYMAN: And the Army got what it needed...

39. MAN: Indeed it did, Mrs. Freyman. But all that time, civilian overcoats weren't being manufactured, to speak of. Then, only last spring, the Military again put in an emergency call for more wool clothes.

40. FREYMAN: And that of course...was before V-J Day.

41. MAN: Yes...and if you remember last spring, V-J Day seemed a long time away. We were thinking maybe even a year or more. And our armies were moving into the Pacific, and moving fast. These armies needed two sets of clothing... tropical and winter, for what looked like a long, hard war against the Japs.

42. FREYMAN: So again our looms went into full production of military outfits...

43. MAN: Right. And again, that meant that very little was being added to the stock of suits and coats in the country's clothing stores.

44. FREYMAN: So that all accounts for the small stocks of certain civilian clothes <u>on hand</u>. But now...the war's over, and factories should be well on the way to making plenty of garments again.

45. MAN: Yes. But there just isn't enough fabric...not enough woolen goods to make all the mens suits we need; not enough cotton fabric to make the shirts and shorts.

46. FREYMAN: But I thought we were manufacturing more fabric than before the war.

47. MAN: That's true...but remember, the demand for clothes is much, much greater. Not only because we have more money to buy things with...but because many of us really need clothes. And the millions of returning veterans, as we said before, make this demand even greater.

48. FREYMAN: Yes, I see...

49. MAN: Now men's suits and coats are still not getting into stores in any volume, Mrs. Freyman, mainly because of two reasons.

50. FREYMAN: And what are they?

51. MAN: One fact is that under good conditions, it takes about three months to make a man's woolen suit. That is...three months from the loom...to the finished garment.

52. FREYMAN: Three months? I had no idea it was that long.

53. MAN: It certainly does. And for a worsted suit...about four months. Now figure it out. In September the Army released the looms and materials for civilian production. All right, that was back in September...now add four months to that, and you get January.

54. FREYMAN: So...suits should start appearing any time?

55. MAN: Wait a minute. Now...I said under good conditions, it takes a suit about three or four months to go from the loom to the finished product. Do you think conditions are good now?

56. FREYMAN: Well, I suppose not.

57. MAN: No...it takes a long time for workers to return from the army, and from war jobs, to the textile mills. Textile mills suffered all during the war, from manpower shortages.

58. FREYMAN: Yes...I know that.

59. MAN: Then two, there are labor-management problems to solve. So...the Civilian Production Administration says...that because of these conditions, which are "not good", it will probably be sometime in March, before a volume of men's suits begin to reach retail stores. And there probably won't be enough suits to meet the demand until 1947 sometime.

60. FREYMAN: And that, Johnny, was what the man from the Civilian Production Administration told me.

61. JOHN: Now that's very interesting, Mrs. Freyman. It's important to know the reasons for things. But...what did the man have to say about shirts...and shorts...

62. FREYMAN: Well...I asked him, and he said...

63. MAN: The shortage of shirts and shorts and other men's cotton goods has been caused by just about the same things we've already talked about.

64. FREYMAN: You mean there's an unusually big demand for them...

65. MAN: Yes. And very small stocks on hand in the stores...caused by the big wartime demand of the years just passed. Plus the fact that there just isn't enough manpower yet to spin and weave the textiles.

66. FREYMAN: Can you give us any idea when we'll begin to see good quantities of shirts in the stores?

67. MAN: Like men's suits...shirts probably won't appear in the quantities we'd like...for this whole year. It won't be until 1947 sometime that you'll be able to find whatever kind and size and style of shirt you want.

68. FREYMAN: But there will be more than there are right now...later on this year, won't there?

69. MAN: Yes, the supply should pick up somewhat. But not nearly enough.

70. FREYMAN: And so that, Johnny, is what the CPA man had to say about the shirt situation.

71. JOHN: I see. So I guess I'll just have to go on wearing the shirt Aunt Sophia sent me for Christmas.

72. FREYMAN: (LAUGH) I guess you will!

73. JOHN: Well tell me this...how are women faring in this clothes situation?

74. FREYMAN: It seems, Johnny...that we have quite an adequate amount of woolen clothes for one thing. Little by little, in most parts of the country, lower-priced women's clothes are appearing. That will be true this spring, with cotton clothes. While we won't have a super-abundance of low-priced cotton dresses...the supply is getting a little better.

75. JOHN: I hear a lot of women complain about the flimsy quality of clothes nowadays.

76. FREYMAN: That's true. There are a lot of shoddy, cheap clothes on the market.

77. JOHN: Shouldn't there be better quality things by now?

78. FREYMAN: Johnny, the point is that people want things so badly and buy things so readily, that there isn't the competition, yet, for quality goods. The real competition is for quantity. Later on, when the frantic buying is over with, we'll find higher quality goods on the market.

79. JOHN: But I thought women turned up their noses at flimsy, badly made things...

80. FREYMAN: Well we should do it more, Johnny...because everytime we purchase something that we know isn't worth the money, we're actually casting our vote for that product.

81. JOHN: Sure you are.

82. FREYMAN: And women can do a lot for this whole situation....by being sure of the quality of an article before purchasing it.

83. JOHN: You mean...if a dress looked as though it were coming apart in the seams...and a handkerchief looked like the colors would run...you shouldn't buy it?

84. FREYMAN: That's the idea. You don't have to be a specialist to tell that a piece of goods, or a dress, or a towel, isn't good quality, and won't last. When it isn't what you want ...it's best not to buy it.

85. JOHN: The idea being...to "hold out" because better stuff is coming. Be choosy.

86. FREYMAN: That's a very good plan, Johnny.

87. JOHN: Well, to get back to this supply picture. Women aren't so bad off, because their clothes have been manufactured pretty much all through the war. And besides that...there isn't the situation of millions of women returning from the wars all at once...needing all the civilian clothes they can get their hands on.

88. FREYMAN: That's true, Johnny.

89. JOHN: All of which reminds me of something...

90. FREYMAN: What's that...

91. JOHN: It doesn't seem to me that styles have changed so much during the war. Skirts certainly aren't any shorter, for instance...or longer.

92. FREYMAN: Of course not, Johnny. Don't you know why styles haven't radically changed?

93. JOHN: No!

94. FREYMAN: Because the War Production Board order restricting clothes styles is still in effect. Garment makers and designers are still restricted by that order.

95. JOHN: Is that it?

96. FREYMAN: Sure it is!

97. JOHN: Oh dear, oh dear...woe is me!

98. FREYMAN: What on earth is the matter?

99. JOHN: I can see it all coming.

100. FREYMAN: What, Johnny?

101. JOHN: What's going to happen when that order goes off? I'll bet we'll have bustles and hoop skirts...and who knows what else!

102. FREYMAN: (LAUGH) I don't think there'll be anything as radical as that!

103. JOHN: Who can tell! You never know what American women are going to decide to wear next. I had no idea we were protected by that WPB order!

104. FREYMAN: Well...don't worry about it...yet...Johnny. Now there are a couple of other things on our list today. We haven't talked about children's clothes. (PAUSE) I say "we haven't talked about children's clothes, Johnny".

105. JOHN: Hmmm? Oh...oh yes. I was just thinking... (NEW VOICE) Children's clothes. Yes. Are there more of them on the market?

106. FREYMAN: Well, you know the WPB concentrated for two years on children's clothes...trying to see that more of them were manufactured...at lower prices.

107. JOHN: And have they succeeded?

108. FREYMAN: There are certainly more children's clothes on the market. The situation isn't nearly as bad, in most parts of the country...as it was this time last year. And that's important because there are a lot more children than there were this time last year.

109. JOHN: Well...I'm glad for the kiddies. And I'm glad for the ladies who find the housecoats and cotton dresses they want, if they find 'em. BUT I'm still sorry for <u>me</u>.

110. FREYMAN: Chin up, Johnny. At least you know the story behind the shortage...and you know that, even if it is slow, the situation is improving all the time.

111. JOHN: (MUSING) 1947...

112. FREYMAN: Oh, now listen! I have something that you ought to hear, Johnny...if you think you're so bad off. Do you know what kind of plight you'd be in if you were in England.

113. JOHN: No...

114. FREYMAN: You'd have just twenty-four ration coupons to last you eight months. And it would cost you twenty-six coupons to get one suit.

115. JOHN: Is that so?

116. FREYMAN: Certainly. And then you'd have nothing left for shoes or shirts or anything else. And a woman in England now... if she bought one pair of full-fashioned stockings a month for eight months...she'd use up her entire ration allotment. Nothing left over.

117. JOHN: That is bad!

118. FREYMAN: And in France, right now, today...clothing and textiles are so scarce that, even with a strict rationing system, the only people who are allowed new clothes...are returning prisoners-of-war and new-born babies.

119. JOHN: Gosh, that's hard to imagine...now in peacetime.

120. FREYMAN: Sure, and if you were a Frenchman, you'd have 20 ration points a year to buy clothes with. An overcoat would cost you 250 points. It would take you twelve years to gather enough points to buy one overcoat.

121. JOHN: Now wait a minute...

122. FREYMAN: That's true. And a dress for me in France would be from 70 to 120 points. It would take me at least three years saving to buy one dress. Three years!

123. JOHN: I can't even believe that, Mrs. Freyman!

124. FREYMAN: Well it's true. They have a clothes rationing system in Chechoslovakia, too. But it's almost theoretical, since there's hardly anything to put ration points on. You'd have 100 points a year, Johnny...but before you could buy anything there, you'd have to have a special certificate of desperate need, or maybe be just returned from a concentration camp. And of course you'd have to find the goods first, which would be almost impossible.

125. JOHN: I had no idea things were that bad.

126. FREYMAN: They are, Johnny. We don't often hear the actual details. For instance, reports coming out of Greece and Italy tell of clothes shortages so bad that people are going around only partially covered in rags, and many children have virtually no clothes at all, this winter.

127. JOHN: Gosh, I guess we shouldn't feel so bad off, Mrs. Freyman.

128. FREYMAN: I don't think so, Johnny. The whole world is very short of textiles. The United States is supplying some of the world needs...but it will take a good while before there will be enough to go around again.

129. JOHN: I should think so...with so many people in the world suffering from severe shortages.

130. FREYMAN: And now to get back to the subject at hand, Johnny. Clothing and textiles here at home...I've been staring at those patches on the elbows of your coat!

131. JOHN: Oh...those...

132. FREYMAN: Who sewed them on?

133. JOHN: Why...I guess I did, as a matter of fact...

134. FREYMAN: Then you ought to send for the booklet, too!

135. JOHN: What booklet...

136. FREYMAN: The one that we're offering free to our CONSUMER TIME listeners. Want to tell about it, Holly Wright?

137. WRIGHT: Friends, a booklet entitled "Mending Men's Suits", is yours free. Simply write to CONSUMER TIME, Washington 25, D. C. Prepared by the Home Economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, it gives complete directions, with pictures and diagrams, on how to do a professional job of mending a man's suit! Men's clothes are still scarce...and returning veterans need most of those that are available...so you'll want to take specially good care of the clothes your menfolks have now. Write today for your free copy of the booklet entitled "Mending Men's Suits". That's CONSUMER TIME, Washington 25, D. C.

138. FREYMAN: Next week, we're going to hear all about how to buy surplus war materials...clothes, utensils...and even jeeps!

139. JOHN: Be with us then...for another edition of...

140. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...

141. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

142. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER.

143. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Christine Kempton, is presented by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C.

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